

New York State Educational Conference Board



September 19, 2017

The Honorable Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Schumer,

As members of the New York State Educational Conference Board (ECB) — which comprises the seven leading educational organizations representing school boards, parents, superintendents, teachers, school administrators, business officials and other educators — we are writing to express our deep concern over current legislative proposals under consideration that could ultimately eliminate Medicaid as a dedicated funding source for school districts across the state. Medicaid funding helps provide necessary health services to millions of students, including children with special needs and those living in poverty.

We urge you to act to protect New York's most vulnerable citizens by preventing this legislation from passing.

Currently, Medicaid operates as a federal/state partnership. This partnership, among other things, allows for Medicaid coverage for almost 37 million children nationwide. In fact, children make up almost half of all Medicaid beneficiaries. Public school districts have depended on this funding for more than 30 years; nationwide, they receive approximately \$4 billion in Medicaid funding each year. New York school districts alone receive more than \$270 million in Medicaid funds; \$136 million of which is federal funding. These funds help school districts provide critical health services to children, including vision and hearing screenings, psychological services, occupational and speech therapy, as well as diabetes and asthma diagnosis and management. Medicaid funding also helps offset costs for medically necessary services and equipment provided to children under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

Once a state has authorized a public school district to become a Medicaid provider, these districts most often receive and use Medicaid funds in four ways:

- **Providing direct services required under individualized education plans (IEPs):** School districts use Medicaid funds to provide medically related education services and special education services to eligible students with disabilities;
- **Medicaid outreach:** The federal government requires states to conduct outreach to individuals to educate them about Medicaid. School districts can and do assist the state with this outreach to families;
- **Providing free care:** Schools can use Medicaid funding to provide certain medical services to a Medicaid-eligible student, which are performed by a qualified medical clinician and
- **Supporting school-based health centers:** School-based health centers often access Medicaid to help offset the cost of providing health services to students who live in poverty and those who have little or no other access to such services. Improving the overall health of students leads to fewer absences and improved academic performance.

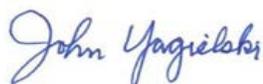
Any proposal that would convert Medicaid to a block grant program or a per-capita grant program at a lower level than health care costs are expected to grow under Medicaid in future years jeopardizes, the ability of

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John Yagielski, Chair – chair@newyorkecb.org

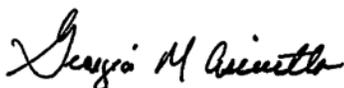
districts to deliver many of these needed services. Districts must continue to provide required IEP supports and services, but without adequate Medicaid funding, and inadequate funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), districts will have little choice but to resort to across the board cuts.

The various legislative proposals currently under consideration would be a prescription to hurt the neediest and most vulnerable children in the state. On behalf of New York's public school leadership groups, we urge you to do whatever you can to prevent that from happening.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information.



John Yagielski, Chair
Educational Conference Board



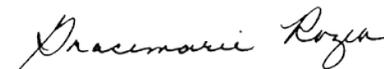
Georgia Ascuitto, Executive Director
Conference of Big 5 School Districts



Michael Borges, Executive Director
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Chuck Dedrick, Executive Director
New York State Council of School Superintendents



Gracemarie Rozea, President
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